Amendment to the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of claims:

1. (currently amended) An image forming method for forming an image including a step of imagewise exposure of a photothermographic material and a step of heating the imagewise exposed photothermographic material with an image recording apparatus including laser irradiation means for scan exposing, with a laser beam, a photothermographic material comprising a photosensitive silver halide, a non-photosensitive organic silver salt, a reducing agent and a binder on at least one surface of a support, and means for transporting the photothermographic material in a sub scanning direction and guiding it to a thermal developing portion, wherein:

1) the photothermographic material comprises at least one compound selected from compounds represented by the following formulae (1a), (1b) and (1c); and

2) a distance between a scanning exposure position of the laser irradiation means and an insertion part of the thermal developing portion is 50 cm or less:

Formula (1a)

$R\text{-}Y_1\text{-}(L_1)_{n1}\text{-}CX_1X_2X_3$

wherein, X_1, X_2 and X_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, provided that at least one of X_1, X_2 and X_3 is a halogen atom; L_1 represents a sulfonyl group; n1 represents 0 or 1; Y_1 represents $-N(R_1)-$, a sulfur atom, an oxygen atom, a selenium atom, or $-(R_2)C=C(R_3)-$; R_1, R_2 and R_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent; and R represents a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an aliphatic group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group;

Formula (1b)

$R\text{-}Y_2\text{-}L_2\text{-}CX_1X_2X_3$

wherein, X_1, X_2 and X_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, provided that at least one of X_1, X_2 and X_3 is a halogen atom; L_2 represents a carbonyl group or a sulfinyl group; Y_2 represents $-N(R_1)-$, a sulfur atom, an oxygen atom, a selenium atom, or $-(R_2)C=C(R_3)-$; R_1, R_2 and R_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent; and R represents a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an aliphatic group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; and

Formula (1c)

$R\text{-}Y_3\text{-}(L_3)_{n2}\text{-}CX_1X_2X_3$

wherein, X_1, X_2 and X_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, provided that at least one of X_1, X_2 and X_3 is a halogen atom; L_3 represents a sulfonyl group, a carbonyl group or a sulfinyl group; n2 represents 2 or 3; Y_3 represents a single bond, $-N(R_1)-$, a sulfur atom, an oxygen atom, a selenium atom, or $-(R_2)C=C(R_3)-$; R_1, R_2 and R_3 each independently represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent; and R represents a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an aliphatic group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group.

2. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein R is an alkyl group.

3. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein at least one of X_1, X_2 and X_3 is Br.

4. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein Y_1 is $-N(R_1)-$.

5. (original) An image forming method according to claim 4, wherein R_1 is an

alkyl group.

6. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein Y_2 is -$N(R_1)$-.

7. (original) An image forming method according to claim 6, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom.

8. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein Y_3 is a single bond.

9. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein n2 represents 2.

10. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein R and R_1, or R and R_3 form a ring.

11. (original) An image forming method according to claim 10, wherein the ring is an alicyclic group.

12. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein the distance between the scanning exposure position and the insertion part of the thermal developing portion is 45 cm or less.

13. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein the photothermographic material has a silver coating amount of 1.9 g or less per 1 m^2 of the photothermographic material.

14. (original) An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein thermal development is carried out for 6 seconds to 14 seconds.

15. (cancelled)

16. (cancelled)

17. (cancelled)

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32. (cancelled)

33. (cancelled)

34. (cancelled)

35. (cancelled)